



Michigan National Organization for Women

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April 12, 2011

Honorable Rick Jones, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee
Farnum Building
Lansing, Michigan

Re: SB 137

Dear Senator Jones and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Michigan National Organization for Women supports strengthening Michigan laws protecting school children from bullying.

However, Michigan NOW opposes SB 137 because it does not enumerate the protected categories of students. We want a bill that protects children who are the targets, not everyone in general from every criticism. This bill would ban a lot of cheerleading chants! It is much too general and so vague as to be unenforceable.

At hearings around the state, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission has heard testimony concerning the need for enumerated legislation protecting children from bullying because of their race, religion, gender, socio-economic status, disability, perceived gender expression and sexual orientation, among other victim categories.

We realize that some religions actively promote discrimination against some of the characteristics the public generally believes should be protected from bullying. We are not suggesting that religions should be barred from promoting these viewpoints among their members and adherents. But children bring the lessons from their parents and other adults and act them out in school. We do not think that conduct arising from these teachings should be tolerated in our public schools where every children from every religious background mingle. Community standards of tolerance and civility need to be taught to children, and rewarded. Intolerance and incivility needs to be discouraged with all the tools available.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Mary Pollock
Legislative Vice President

NOW's purpose is to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men.